

Civil War Book Review

Winter 2021

Article 4

Stonewall Jackson, Beresford Hope, and the Meaning of the American Civil War in Britain

Niels Eichhorn

Independent Scholar, eichhorn.niels@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr>

Recommended Citation

Eichhorn, Niels (2021) "Stonewall Jackson, Beresford Hope, and the Meaning of the American Civil War in Britain," *Civil War Book Review*. Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 .

DOI: 10.31390/cwbr.23.1.04

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cwbr/vol23/iss1/4>

Review

Niels Eichhorn

Winter 2021

Turner, Michael J. *Stonewall Jackson, Beresford Hope, and the Meaning of the American Civil War in Britain*. Louisiana State University Press, 2020. HARDCOVER. \$50.00 ISBN 9780807171080 pp. ix, 334

The study of Civil War Memory has brought forth, especially, in the last two decades, a phenomenal amount of excellent scholarship, such as recent works by Adam Domby or Kevin Levin. While certain subject matters remain unexplored, it seems we have reached the point of the proverbial dead horse. However, one aspect that practitioners of Civil War Memory studies have so far ignored is the transnational perspective. Civil War transnational scholarship, from Paul Quigley and Andre Fleche to more recent works, has highlighted what a focus beyond the water's edge of the United States can illustrate about U.S. History and the impact of outside influences on the development of a national identity in the United States. Michael Turner finally brings some of that same emphasis to the study of memory.

Divided into two parts, Turner focuses his attention first on the pro-Confederate propaganda efforts of the British conservative politician Beresford Hope before turning to the British fundraising effort to donate a statue of Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson to Richmond, Va. In part, Turner adds to a well-established, but he thinks still too uncritical and narrowly constructed, scholarship on British public opinion during the Civil War. In that, Turner claims that it was the publicity work of Beresford Hope that brought Jackson's character and exploits to the attention of the British, which made raising money for a Jackson statue possible.

Turner illustrates that Beresford Hope was a fairly typical conservative politician in that he looked with suspicion to the United States and its democratic system of government. At the same time, and in line with recent scholarship by Peter O'Connor, Turner notes that Hope also viewed northern and southern sections of the United States as distinctive and unique entities, with the South as superior, as the section slowly modernized and industrialized. At the same

time, Hope demonstrated a growing sense of white supremacy as he critically assessed the limits of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. As a religious person, Hope looked favorable to the religious views in the southern states. However, the British government never acted on the pro-southern propagandist's desire for British support for the fledgling rebel nation.

In the second part, Turner turns to the British fascination with romantic and unsuccessful heroes and how Hope and other pro-Confederate sympathizers turned Stonewall Jackson into such a figure. While the British newspapers covered Jackson's military exploits, Turner shows that it was his death and associated newspaper coverage that made the Virginian a heroic figure. In their efforts, these propagandists focused on Jackson's religiosity and his virtuous character. Even after the war, Jackson remained the subject of many publications and speeches. The continued interest, Turner shows, brought about the desire for some public commemoration that culminated with fundraisers to dedicate a statue to the fallen general, which they donated to the City of Richmond.

British Public Opinion scholarship during the Civil War has come a long way since the hopelessly flawed arguments of pro-Northern working class and pro-Southern aristocracy. Recent works have shown that there was no easy binary of being for one or the other side, but Turner is certainly correct that there are some seriously flawed recent works. While Turner follows through in two chapters on his promise to use a wider source base, the reader is left with a few questions, which are likely for future scholars to explore. Turner never fully explains this, but Beresford Hope belonged to a small group of pro-Confederates, such as William Henry Gregory, William Schaw Lindsay, and James Spence, who are involved in all of these Jackson commemoration related events. This was a group of elite, upper class politicians. Turner does not show if, how, and why they were successful in convincing a broader public about the heroism of Stonewall Jackson. Why would workers support the southern cause or cheer Stonewall Jackson? Did they even care? It would be interesting to know what other causes Beresford Hope championed during these years. Was he a supporter of Hungarian or Italian nationalists? What were the issues in his election campaign for Stoke-upon-Trent? Similarly, it would be interesting to see how much Stonewall Jackson fits into the British fascination with other failed, romantic, semi-heroic characters of the era such as Giuseppe Garibaldi or Lajos Kossuth. While more context would have benefitted the book, Turner's study is an important addition to the literature of British public opinion during the Civil War.

Turner extends our focus beyond just the immediate war years and forces especially the insular study of memory to contemplate how the Civil War was remembered and presented in countries far from the Lost Cause narrative's evolution and the battlefield memorialization. As Damian Shiels has shown with the Irish, there is much left to do for other parts of Europe. With his book, Turner pushes ajar a door previously closed and there is much left to explore, such as why there are Civil War reenactments in Great Britain today, why the Confederate flag is such a popular symbol in Europe, and the interplay of war and memory during this era in Europe, Latin America, and the United States.

Niels Eichhorn is a history writer in Macon, Georgia. He holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of Arkansas. He is the author of Liberty and Slavery: European Separatists, Southern Secession, and the American Civil War (LSU 2019), Atlantic History in the Nineteenth Century: Migration, Trade, Conflict, and Ideas (Palgrave 2019), and The Civil War Battles of Macon (The History Press, 2021). He has published articles on Civil War diplomacy in Civil War History and American Nineteenth Century History, among others.